

March 06, 2008

### **Obey SUPPORTS LEGISLATION TO EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH COVERAGE**

*Measure Intended To End Discrimination Against Patients With Mental Illnesses*

—

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) joined a bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives in support of legislation intended to end discrimination against patients requiring treatment for mental illnesses.

“Mental illnesses are treatable diseases that impact millions of Americans every year. Unfortunately, many group health plans don't provide the same coverage for mental illnesses as they do for physical ones,” Obey said. “This legislation is intended to help end that practice and ensure more Americans get the mental health care they need and deserve.”

The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, which passed the House by a vote of 268 to 148 last night, prohibits insurers and group health plans that offer mental health benefits from imposing treatment or financial limitations that are more restrictive from those they apply to medical and surgical services.

The legislation applies only to insurers and group health plans that provide mental health benefits and the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this legislation will have a miniscule impact on health insurance premiums.

The bill is backed by a diverse group of organizations including the American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Hispanic Medical Association, American Counseling Association, Families USA, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, and Mental Health America.

# # #